

BUFFALOBERRY PATCH

BY GREG FREEMAN, DEPARTMENT NEWS EDITOR

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Spring Duck Index Remains High

The number of breeding ducks in North Dakota remains high, according to the state Game and Fish Department spring breeding duck survey.

The 58th annual spring survey, conducted May 9-15, showed an index of more than 4.1 million birds. That's 4 percent lower than last year, but still twice the 1948-2004 average, according to Mike Johnson, migratory game bird management supervisor for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department.

Duck indices were up from 2004 for green-winged teal (63 percent), canvasback (24 percent), ruddy ducks (10 percent), and a category labeled "other" species comprised mostly of ring-necked ducks (25 percent). Indices for all other species were unchanged or below 2004. The most significant decreases were for gadwall (14 percent) and mallards (10 percent).

The survey is conducted by biologists driving more than 1,800 miles on eight routes spread across the state from Canada to South Dakota. Observers count all ducks and water areas within 220 yards of the roadway, Johnson said. "This large sample gives indices from which we can compare year-to-year changes and the long-term trends of habitat conditions and waterfowl numbers."

While the 2005 water index was down from last year, it still remained 21 percent above the 1948-2004 average. Despite what the water indices show, observers noted that water conditions were fairly poor in many areas.

However, Johnson said, rains that began during the survey period continued across the state, with some regions experiencing considerable rainfall that restored wetland levels. "While this increase in water was too late to significantly affect breeding duck distribution, it will certainly contribute to the potential for renesting by failed hens and improve brood survival," Johnson said.

While results of July's brood survey were not tallied when this issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS* went to press, preliminary observations indicated production that should be well above average.

Opening Dates for Fall Hunting Seasons

Season dates for most fall hunting seasons have been set. Following is a list of major seasons and their opening dates. Those starred are tentative and were not yet officially set as this issue went to press. The September-October issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS* will include more detailed season information and hunting prospects.

Season	Date
Early Elk (E3, E4)	August 12
Fall Crow	August 13
Mourning Dove	September 1
Early Canada Goose	September 1
Deer Bow	September 2
Pronghorn Bow	September 2
Sharptail, Hun,	
Ruffed Grouse	September 10
Youth Deer Hunting	September 16
*Youth Waterfowl	September 17
Sandhill Crane	September 17
Sage Grouse	September 26
Bighorn Sheep	September 23
*Ducks, Geese	
(residents only)	September 24
Pronghorn	September 30
*Ducks, Geese	
(nonresident opener)	October 1
Swan	October 1
Regular Elk (E1, E2)	October 7
Early Moose	
(M1C, M4, M8, M9, M10)	October 7
Fall Turkey	October 8
Pheasant	October 8
Prairie Grouse	
(Prairie Chickens)	October 8
Deer Gun	November 4
Late Moose (M5, M6)	November 25

*Tentative, pending federal frameworks.



Spring Ruffed Grouse Up, Sharptails Down

North Dakota's spring ruffed grouse survey indicated a 37 percent population increase statewide compared to 2004, while reports from the 2005 spring sharp-tailed grouse census indicated a 6 percent drop in the number of male grouse recorded compared to last year.

To conduct the ruffed grouse survey, observers tallied the number of male grouse heard drumming on 196 miles of spring survey routes in the Turtle Mountains, Pembina Hills and McHenry County (J. Clark Salyer National Wildlife Refuge).

All three areas had at least a 30 percent increase in the number of drumming males compared to 2004. The statewide average number of ruffed grouse drums heard per stop was 1.07, up substantially from last year's 0.78.

Ruffed grouse populations run in 9-10 year cycles, and have been low for the last three years. Biologists hope this is an indication that the cycle in ruffed grouse numbers has bottomed out in North Dakota.

While spring ruffed grouse numbers were up, sharptails numbers showed a slight decrease. Observers counted 5,114 sharptails on spring dancing grounds this year compared to 5,465 in 2004.

More than 700 square miles were censused. Male grouse recorded per square mile decreased from 7.3 in 2004 to 6.7 this year.

A better indication of the fall prospects won't be known until mid-August once brood surveys have been completed.

JAKES Day at Long Lake Refuge

The fifth annual Junior Sportsman's JAKES Day is August 20 at Long Lake National Wildlife Refuge. All kids 17 and younger interested in wildlife, outdoors and hunting are invited to attend.

Area experts will present several informative, hands-on sessions including archery, duck banding, gun dog training, elk hunting, mammal track identification, waterfowling and turkey hunting.

JAKES Day is free and will run from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Long Lake NWR southeast of Moffit. Lunch is provided and door prizes will be given, including a youth model shotgun and compound bow. The event is hosted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bismarck-Mandan Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, Delta Waterfowl, North Dakota Bowhunters Association and Kidder County Sportsmen's Association.

Space is limited. Pre-registration is required no later than August 17. To register, or to learn more about the program, contact Lynda or Gregg Knutsen at Long Lake NWR at 701-387-4397. Parents are welcome to attend.



Getting HIP

Migratory bird hunters need to register with the Harvest Information Program before going hunting this fall.

If you will – or even think you will – hunt ducks, geese, mourning dove, snipe, tundra swan, sandhill crane, coot or woodcock in 2005, you need to get HIP certified. Hunters who secured a HIP number for the spring snow goose season do not need to get another one.

HIP is necessary to identify all migratory bird hunters, regardless of age, as potential participants in nationwide migratory game bird harvest surveys. These surveys are important to the future of hunting, as they allow wildlife management agencies to better document harvests, which is vital to long-term management.

Getting HIP certified is free and easy. Dig out your 2005 hunting or combination license and have your social security number handy. Then log on to the Game and Fish Department's website at discovernd.com/gnf, click on HIP on the home page, follow the instructions and write your HIP number on your license. Or you can call toll-free 888-634-4798 or 800-406-6409.



Early Canada Goose Season Opens September 1

Hunters are asked to help manage the state's resident Canada goose population by participating in an early season the first two weeks in September.

North Dakota's seventh early Canada goose season is set to open September 1 and will continue through September 15. Daily bag limit is five Canada geese and the possession limit is 10. Shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset.

The purpose of the early season is to increase harvest of resident Canada geese – those birds that nest and raise young in North Dakota – whose statewide population has grown substantially in the past several years. The early season promotes almost exclusive taking of resident birds, as migrant Canada geese typically don't filter into the state until later in September.

All migratory bird hunters must register with the Harvest Information Program at 888-634-4798. Those who registered to hunt the spring light goose season do not have to register with HIP again, as it is required only once per year. Normal licensing requirements for the regular season, including a federal duck stamp, apply to the September Canada goose season.

Sandhill Crane Permits Available

Hunting permits for North Dakota's 2005 sandhill crane season – opening Saturday, September 17 – are available from the Game and Fish Department.

As in past years, prospective hunters need a special crane permit, regardless of age. Permits cost \$5 and are available through the State Game and Fish Department's Bismarck office.

Hunters can purchase crane permits online at the Department's website, discovernd.com/gnf. Another option is to send permit fees, along with personal information, including height, weight, sex, social security number, date of birth, color of hair and eyes, and hunter education number and state issued to: Crane Permit, NDGF, 100 N. Bismarck Expressway, Bismarck, ND 58501.

NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS Live!

With Radio Host Doug Leier, Game and Fish Outreach Biologist

Saturdays at 11 a.m. (10 a.m. mountain time)

on the following North Dakota Clear Channel radio network stations:

KFGO-AM 790, Fargo

KKXL-AM 1440, Grand Forks • KCJB-AM 910, Minot

KLTC-AM 1460, Dickinson • KFYZ-AM 550, Bismarck

Join Doug and guests for news and conversation that embraces everyone with an interest in North Dakota's Outdoors.

2004-05 Hunting and Fishing License Sales Complete

More people went hunting in North Dakota last year than in 2003, while fewer fished, according to final statistics compiled by the state Game and Fish Department.

The trend was the same for both residents and nonresidents. The state sold 103,677 resident general game hunting licenses in 2004, up from 102,560. However, the number of resident fishing licenses decreased to 126,745, down from 133,464.

Resident totals include 43,334 combination licenses sold last year, up from 42,714. The combination license includes fishing, small game, general game and habitat, and furbearer licenses.

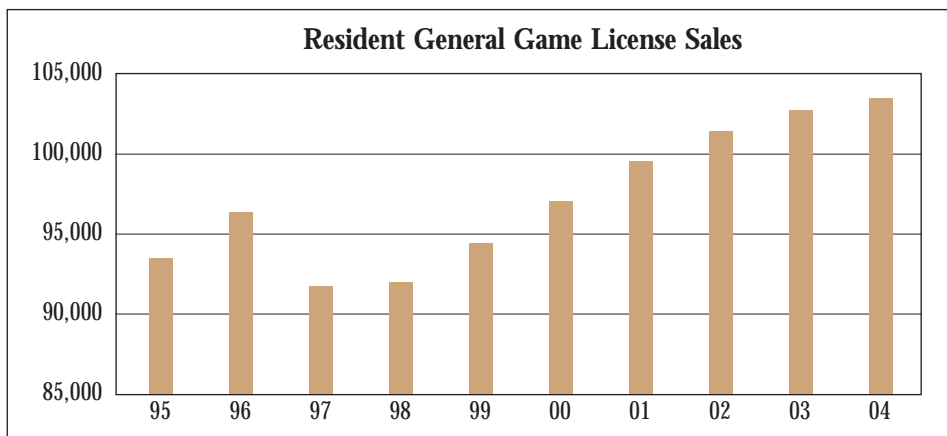
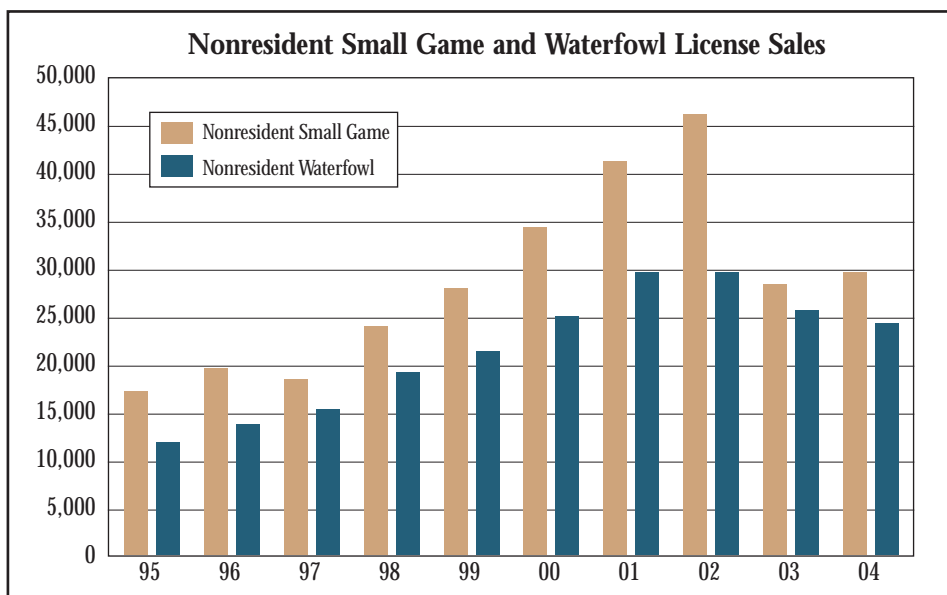
Nonresidents purchased 34,185 fishing licenses last year, down from 37,877.

Nonresidents bought 46,566 general game hunting licenses last year, up from 45,965.

While there were fewer nonresident waterfowl licenses issued last year, more small game licenses were sold to out-of-staters than in 2003. The nonresident waterfowl license tally was 24,375 last year, down from 26,066. The number of small game licenses sold to nonresidents numbered 29,777, an increase from 28,687 sold in 2003.

Final numbers are based on figures submitted from county auditors and from sales through the Department's Bismarck office, licensing telephone number and the Internet.

Editor's Note: Nonresident small game licenses fell considerably from 2002 to 2003 after North Dakota lawmakers decided nonresident waterfowl hunters no longer needed a small game license to hunt migratory game birds in the state. A nonresident waterfowl license used to be a \$10 add-on to the small game license, a purchase many out-of-state upland game bird hunters would make just in case the opportunity arose to shoot a duck or goose. In 2002, more than 46,500 small game licenses were sold to nonresidents. That number fell the following year to about 29,000.



Swan Hunt Application Deadline Nears

The application deadline for North Dakota's fall tundra swan season is August 17.

The statewide tundra swan hunting season is October 1 through December 11. Both residents and nonresidents are eligible to apply. The fee is \$5 for residents and \$25 for nonresidents.

Interested hunters can apply, or print out an application for mailing, at the Game and Fish Department's website, discovernd.com/gnf. Regular license fees apply and no service charge is added. The Department's online application feature will be deactivated August 17 at midnight.

Applications are also available from Game and Fish offices, county auditors, license vendors, or by calling 800-406-6409. People applying by calling the 800 number must use a credit card and a service charge is added.

Earth Day Project a Huge Success

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department sponsored an Earth Day project this spring to help students learn about the importance of a healthy environment for fish and wildlife. After tallying the number of participants, the event turned out bigger than expected, according to Jeb Williams, Department outreach biologist.

Nearly 4,200 conservation-minded students participated in Earth Day clean-up activities in April and May on state owned and managed lands in North Dakota. "We received 64 event reporting forms covering all corners of the state," Williams said. "It definitely was a statewide effort."

The annual event involves a contest for North Dakota youth to design a patch to distribute to groups who participate in Earth Day clean-up projects. In 2004, 1,100 students participated in clean-up activities.

"Our youth in the state are receiving the message and understanding the significance of a clean and healthy environment for our fish and wildlife resources," Williams said.



GAME & FISH STAFF NOTES

Fecske Hired as Wildlife Biologist

Dorothy Fecske was hired in June as the Department's furbearer/wildlife disease biologist.

Fecske, a native of Pennsylvania, has a wildlife science degree from Penn State University, a master's degree in applied ecology and conservation biology from Frostburg State University, and holds a doctorate in biological sciences from South Dakota State University.

Fecske studied black bears in western Maryland and mountain lions in the Black Hills in South Dakota.



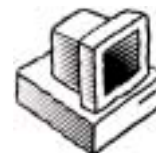
Dorothy Fecske

NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS ON TELEVISION

Your Weekly Window on the WILD

Bismarck	KFYR	Tuesday	10 pm
Bismarck	KXMB	Sunday	10 pm
Bismarck	CATV	Saturday	Noon
Dickinson	KQCD	Tuesday	*9 pm
Dickinson	KXMA	Sunday	*9 pm
Fargo	KVRR	Sunday	9 pm
Grand Forks	WDAZ	Wednesday	5 pm
Minot	KMOT	Tuesday	10 pm
Minot	KXMC	Monday	Noon
Williston	KUMV	Tuesday	10 pm
Williston	KXMD	Monday	Noon

**Mountain time*



INSTANT LICENSING

Online at
www.discovernd.com/gnf/
Over the phone at **800-406-6409**

Most types of Game and Fish licenses and applications are now available both online at the Department's website, or over the phone. Online license purchases have no surcharge, while instant licenses over the phone carries a service charge of \$4 for transactions of \$70 or less, and \$10 if the cost is more than \$70.

